

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

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1. A magnetic recording medium comprising:

an exchange layer structure; and

10 a magnetic layer provided on the exchange layer structure,

said exchange layer structure comprising a ferromagnetic layer and a nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the ferromagnetic layer,

15 said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually antiparallel magnetizations,

20 said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer satisfying a relationship $Hc1' \geq Hc2'$, where $Hc1'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the ferromagnetic layer and $Hc2'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the magnetic layer.

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2. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 1, wherein each of the ferromagnetic layer and the magnetic layer is made of a material selected from a group consisting of Ni, 30 Fe, Co, Ni alloy, Fe alloy and Co alloy.

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3. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 2, wherein the Co alloy is selected from a group consisting of CoCrTa, CoCrPt and

CoCrPt-M alloy, where M is an element or alloy thereof selected from a group consisting of B, Mo, Nb, Ta, W and Cu.

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4. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 2, wherein each of the
10 ferromagnetic layer and the magnetic layer is made
of an alloy having CoCrPt as a main component such
that a Pt content of the magnetic layer in atomic %
is less than or equal to a Pt content of the
ferromagnetic layer in atomic %.

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5. The magnetic recording medium as
20 claimed in claim 4, wherein the Pt content of the
magnetic layer is at least 1 atomic % less than the
Pt content of the ferromagnetic layer.

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6. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 1, wherein the ferromagnetic layer
and the magnetic layer satisfy a relationship
30 $(Hc1'/Hc1) > (Hc2'/Hc2)$, where Hc1 denotes a static
coercivity of the ferromagnetic layer and Hc2
denotes a dynamic coercivity of the magnetic layer.

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7. The magnetic recording medium as

claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

a ferromagnetic bonding layer disposed between the ferromagnetic layer and the nonmagnetic coupling layer,

5 said ferromagnetic bonding layer and said ferromagnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually parallel magnetizations.

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8. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

15 a magnetic coupling layer disposed between the nonmagnetic coupling layer and the magnetic layer,

 said magnetic bonding layer and said magnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually parallel magnetizations.

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9. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

25 a ferromagnetic bonding layer disposed between the ferromagnetic layer and the nonmagnetic coupling layer; and

 a magnetic bonding layer disposed between the nonmagnetic coupling layer and the magnetic layer,

30 a mutual exchange coupling between the ferromagnetic bonding layer and the magnetic bonding layer being larger than a mutual exchange coupling between the ferromagnetic layer and the magnetic layer.

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10. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 9, wherein each of the
ferromagnetic bonding layer and the magnetic bonding
layer is made of an alloy having Co or Fe as a main
5 component, and Co or Fe contents of each of the
ferromagnetic bonding layer and the magnetic bonding
layer are greater than corresponding Co or Fe
contents of each of the ferromagnetic layer and the
magnetic layer.

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11. The magnetic recording medium as
15 claimed in claim 9, wherein each of the
ferromagnetic bonding layer and the magnetic bonding
layer has a thickness in a range of 0.2 nm to 5 nm.

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12. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 1, wherein the nonmagnetic coupling
layer is made of a material selected from a group
25 consisting of Ru, Rh, Ir, Ru alloy, Rh alloy and Ir
alloy.

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13. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 1, wherein the nonmagnetic coupling
layer has a thickness in a range of 0.4 nm to 1.5 nm.

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14. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 1, wherein the ferromagnetic layer
and the magnetic layer satisfy a relationship $H_{k1} \geq H_{k2}$, where H_{k1} denotes an anisotropic field of the
5 ferromagnetic layer and H_{k2} denotes an anisotropic
field of the magnetic layer.

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15. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 1, wherein the ferromagnetic layer
and the magnetic layer satisfy a relationship $H_{c1} < H_{c2}$, where H_{c1} denotes a static coercivity of the
15 ferromagnetic layer and H_{c2} denotes a static
coercivity of the magnetic layer.

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16. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 1, wherein the magnetic layer has a
thickness in a range of 5 nm to 30 nm.

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17. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 1, wherein the ferromagnetic layer
30 has a thickness in a range of 1 nm to 10 nm.

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18. A magnetic recording medium
comprising:
an exchange layer structure; and

a magnetic layer provided on the exchange layer structure,

5 said exchange layer structure comprising a ferromagnetic layer and a nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the ferromagnetic layer,

said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually antiparallel magnetizations,

10 each of the ferromagnetic layer and the magnetic layer being made of an alloy having CoCrPt as a main component such that a Pt content of the magnetic layer in atomic % is less than or equal to a Pt content of the ferromagnetic layer in atomic %.

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19. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 18, wherein the ferromagnetic layer 20 and the magnetic layer satisfy a relationship $Hc1 < Hc2$, where $Hc1$ denotes a static coercivity of the ferromagnetic layer and $Hc2$ denotes a static coercivity of the magnetic layer.

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20. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 18, wherein the ferromagnetic layer 30 and the magnetic layer satisfy a relationship $(Hc1'/Hc1) > (Hc2'/Hc2)$, where $Hc1'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the ferromagnetic layer, $Hc1$ denotes a static coercivity of the ferromagnetic layer, $Hc2'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the magnetic layer, and $Hc2$ denotes a dynamic coercivity 35 of the magnetic layer.

21. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 18, further comprising:

5 a ferromagnetic bonding layer disposed between the ferromagnetic layer and the nonmagnetic coupling layer,

said ferromagnetic bonding layer and said ferromagnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually parallel magnetizations.

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22. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 18, further comprising:

15 a magnetic coupling layer disposed between the nonmagnetic coupling layer and the magnetic layer,

said magnetic bonding layer and said magnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually parallel magnetizations.

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23. The magnetic recording medium as 25 claimed in claim 18, further comprising:

a ferromagnetic bonding layer disposed between the ferromagnetic layer and the nonmagnetic coupling layer; and

30 a magnetic bonding layer disposed between the nonmagnetic coupling layer and the magnetic layer,

35 a mutual exchange coupling between the ferromagnetic bonding layer and the magnetic bonding layer being larger than a mutual exchange coupling between the ferromagnetic layer and the magnetic layer.

24. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 23, wherein each of the
ferromagnetic bonding layer and the magnetic bonding
layer is made of an alloy having Co or Fe as a main
5 component, and Co or Fe contents of each of the
ferromagnetic bonding layer and the magnetic bonding
layer are greater than corresponding Co or Fe
contents of each of the ferromagnetic layer and the
magnetic layer.

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25. The magnetic recording medium as
15 claimed in claim 23, wherein each of the
ferromagnetic bonding layer and the magnetic bonding
layer has a thickness in a range of 0.2 nm to 5 nm.

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26. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 18, wherein the nonmagnetic
coupling layer is made of a material selected from a
25 group consisting of Ru, Rh, Ir, Ru alloy, Rh alloy
and Ir alloy.

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27. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 18, wherein the nonmagnetic
coupling layer has a thickness in a range of 0.4 nm
to 1.5 nm.

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28. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 18, wherein the ferromagnetic layer
and the magnetic layer satisfy a relationship $H_{k1} \geq H_{k2}$, where H_{k1} denotes an anisotropic field of the
5 ferromagnetic layer and H_{k2} denotes an anisotropic
field of the magnetic layer.

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29. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 18, wherein the magnetic layer has
a thickness in a range of 5 nm to 30 nm.

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30. The magnetic recording medium as
claimed in claim 18, wherein the ferromagnetic layer
20 has a thickness in a range of 1 nm to 10 nm.

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31. A magnetic recording medium
comprising:

a first exchange layer structure;
a second exchange layer structure provided on
the first exchange layer structure; and
30 a magnetic layer provided on the second
exchange layer structure,
said first exchange layer structure comprising
a first ferromagnetic layer and a first nonmagnetic
coupling layer provided on the first ferromagnetic
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said second exchange layer structure comprising
a second ferromagnetic layer and a second

nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the second ferromagnetic layer,

5 said first and second ferromagnetic layers being exchange-coupled and having mutually antiparallel magnetizations,

 said second ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually antiparallel magnetizations,

10 said first and second ferromagnetic layers and said magnetic layer satisfying a relationship $Hc1' \geq Hc2'$ and $Hc3' \leq Hc2'$, where $Hc3'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the first ferromagnetic layer, $Hc1'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the second ferromagnetic layer, and $Hc2'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the magnetic layer.

20 32. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 31, wherein:

 each of said first and second ferromagnetic layers and said magnetic layer is made of a material selected from a group consisting of CoCrPt and 25 CoCrPt-M alloy, where M is an element or an alloy thereof selected from a group consisting of B, Mo, Nb, Ta, W and Cu, and

30 a Pt content of the first ferromagnetic layer is smaller than a Pt content of the magnetic layer by at least 7 atomic % or, on the order of the atomic % of impurities.

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 33. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 31, further comprising:

a magnetic bonding layer at least disposed at one location selected from a group consisting of a location between the first ferromagnetic layer and the first nonmagnetic coupling layer, a location 5 between the first nonmagnetic coupling layer and the second ferromagnetic layer, a location between the second ferromagnetic layer and the second nonmagnetic coupling layer, and a location between the second nonmagnetic coupling layer and the 10 magnetic layer,

said magnetic bonding layer and an adjacent one of the first ferromagnetic layer, the second ferromagnetic layer and the magnetic layer having mutually parallel magnetizations.

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34. The magnetic recording medium as 20 claimed in claim 31, wherein the magnetic layer has a thickness in a range of 5 nm to 30 nm.

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35. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 31, wherein at least one of the first and second ferromagnetic layers has a thickness in a range of 1 nm to 10 nm.

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36. The magnetic recording medium as 35 claimed in claim 31, wherein each of the first and second nonmagnetic coupling layers is made of a material selected from a group consisting of Ru, Rh,

Ir, Ru alloy, Rh alloy and Ir alloy.

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37. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 31, wherein each of the first and second nonmagnetic coupling layers has a thickness in a range of 0.4 nm to 1.5 nm.

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38. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 31, wherein the second ferromagnetic layer and the magnetic layer satisfy a relationship $H_{k1} \geq H_{k2}$, where H_{k1} denotes an anisotropic field of the second ferromagnetic layer and H_{k2} denotes an anisotropic field of the magnetic layer.

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39. A magnetic recording medium comprising:

an exchange layer structure; and
a magnetic layer provided on the exchange layer structure,

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said exchange layer structure comprising a ferromagnetic layer and a nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the ferromagnetic layer,

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said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually antiparallel magnetizations,

a magnetization direction of the magnetic layer switching before a magnetization direction of the

ferromagnetic layer in response to a recording magnetic field which is applied to the magnetic layer and the ferromagnetic layer to switch the magnetization directions thereof.

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10 40. The magnetic recording medium as claimed in claim 39, wherein the magnetization direction of the ferromagnetic layer is aligned in a direction antiparallel to the magnetization direction of the magnetic layer after a time of 1 nanosecond to 10 milliseconds elapses from a time 15 when the recording magnetic field is applied.

20 41. A magnetic storage apparatus comprising:

25 at least one magnetic recording medium having an exchange layer structure and a magnetic layer provided on the exchange layer structure; and

25 a head to record information on and/or reproduce information from the magnetic recording medium,

30 wherein exchange layer structure comprises a ferromagnetic layer and a nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the ferromagnetic layer,

35 said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer are exchange-coupled and have mutually antiparallel magnetizations, and

35 said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer satisfy a relationship $Hc1' \geq Hc2'$, where $Hc1'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the ferromagnetic layer and $Hc2'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the

magnetic layer.

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42. A magnetic storage apparatus comprising:

at least one magnetic recording medium having an exchange layer structure and a magnetic layer provided on the exchange layer structure; and

10 a head to record information on and/or reproduce information from the magnetic recording medium,

15 wherein said exchange layer structure comprises a ferromagnetic layer and a nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the ferromagnetic layer,

said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer are exchange-coupled and have mutually antiparallel magnetizations, and

20 each of the ferromagnetic layer and the magnetic layer is made of an alloy having CoCrPt as a main component such that a Pt content of the magnetic layer in atomic % is less than or equal to a Pt content of the ferromagnetic layer in atomic %.

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43. A magnetic storage apparatus comprising:

30 at least one magnetic recording medium having a first exchange layer structure, a second exchange layer structure provided on the first exchange layer structure, and a magnetic layer provided on the second exchange layer structure; and

35 a head to record information on and/or reproduce information from the magnetic recording

medium,

wherein said first exchange layer structure comprises a first ferromagnetic layer and a first nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the first 5 ferromagnetic layer,

said second exchange layer structure comprises a second ferromagnetic layer and a second nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the second ferromagnetic layer,

10 said first and second ferromagnetic layers are exchange-coupled and have mutually antiparallel magnetizations,

15 said second ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer are exchange-coupled and have mutually antiparallel magnetizations, and

20 said first and second ferromagnetic layers and said magnetic layer satisfy a relationship $Hc1' \geq Hc2'$ and $Hc3' \leq Hc2'$, where $Hc3'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the first ferromagnetic layer, $Hc1'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the second ferromagnetic layer, and $Hc2'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the magnetic layer.

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44. A magnetic storage apparatus comprising:

30 at least one magnetic recording medium having an exchange layer structure and a magnetic layer provided on the exchange layer structure; and

a head to record information on and/or reproduce information from the magnetic recording medium,

35 wherein said exchange layer structure comprises a ferromagnetic layer and a nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the ferromagnetic layer,

said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer are exchange-coupled and have mutually antiparallel magnetizations, and

5 a magnetization direction of the magnetic layer switches before a magnetization direction of the ferromagnetic layer in response to a recording magnetic field which is applied to the magnetic layer and the ferromagnetic layer to switch the magnetization directions thereof.

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45. A recording method for magnetically recording information on a magnetic recording medium by applying a recording magnetic field thereon, said magnetic recording medium having an exchange layer structure and a magnetic layer provided on the exchange layer structure, said exchange layer structure comprising a ferromagnetic layer and a nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the ferromagnetic layer, said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually antiparallel magnetizations in a state where no recording magnetic field is applied thereon, said method comprising:

 applying a recording magnetic field on the magnetic recording medium so as to satisfy a relationship $Hc1' - HE1 > Hh1$ and $Hc2' - HE2 < Hh2$,
30 where $Hc1'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the ferromagnetic layer, $Hc2'$ denotes a dynamic coercivity of the magnetic layer, $HE1$ denotes an exchange field applied to the ferromagnetic layer, $HE2$ denotes an exchange field applied to the magnetic layer, $Hh1$ denotes a recording magnetic field applied on the ferromagnetic layer, and $Hh2$ denotes a recording magnetic field applied on the

magnetic layer.

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46. A recording method for magnetically recording information on a magnetic recording medium by applying a recording magnetic field thereon, said magnetic recording medium having an exchange layer structure and a magnetic layer provided on the exchange layer structure, said exchange layer structure comprising a ferromagnetic layer and a nonmagnetic coupling layer provided on the ferromagnetic layer, said ferromagnetic layer and said magnetic layer being exchange-coupled and having mutually antiparallel magnetizations in a state where no recording magnetic field is applied thereon, said method comprising:

20 applying a recording magnetic field on the magnetic recording medium so that a magnetization direction of the magnetic layer switches before a magnetization direction of the ferromagnetic layer in response to the recording magnetic field.

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